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## BRIEFER COMMUNICATIONS.

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### RUSSIA IN ASIA.<sup>1</sup>

From the Kingdom of Muscovy, with an area of over half a million square miles, the Russian Empire has progressed to its present vast expanse of territory, comprising most of eastern Europe and the whole of northern and central Asia—a total of nearly nine million square miles, of which the Asiatic possessions—the Caucasus, Central Asia and Siberia—aggregate 6,564,778 square miles, or more than two-thirds. In other words, Asiatic Russia is considerably more than twice the extent of the United States (3,025,600 square miles), exclusive of Alaska and our recent insular acquisitions, and covers more than one-third of the total area of Asia. Of Asiatic Russia, Siberia figures for about two-thirds, or 4,833,496 miles; the next division, in extent of territory, being the Kirghiz Steppe, 755,793; then Turkestan, 409,414; Transcaspia, 383,618, and finally, the Caucasus, including Transcaucasia, 180,843 square miles. But “a very considerable portion of Asiatic Russia,” says Mr. Krausse, “consists of derelict territory, which is useless as the habitation of man. This is especially the case with those parts of Siberia which are in the Arctic Circle, forming about one-third of the country, and the sandy wastes of the Ust Urt, Kara Kum, and Kizil Kum in Central Asia. Indeed, the whole of Turkestan and Transcaspia, and a great proportion of the Kirghiz Steppes consist of land capable of producing nothing.”<sup>2</sup> Deducting these, however, there would still remain enormous tracts of territory which are capable of a development that, sooner or later, will profoundly affect the economic forces of the world. Siberia is undoubtedly rich in minerals, and “in the steppe land and generally in the Transbaikal and Amur provinces, the land is fertile, and large harvests of corn and other cereals are annually raised, while the breeding of cattle, horses and sheep is a profitable industry.”<sup>3</sup> The United States Consul at Vladivostock, Mr. Greener, in a report dated November 16, 1899,<sup>4</sup> speaks of the variety of products of the Amur region and the expectations of Russian development of the “vast and rich fields of Manchuria,” which “at the present time is the promised land toward which all speculative eyes in Siberia are turned.”

<sup>1</sup> *Russia in Asia: A Record and a Study, 1558-1899.* By ALEXIS KRAUSSE. Pp. 411, with twelve maps. Price, \$4.00. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1899.

<sup>2</sup> *Russia in Asia*, page 12.

<sup>3</sup> See Advance Sheets, No. 630, United States Consular Reports.

Whatever may be the deficiencies of soil and climate of portions of Asiatic Russia, there can be no doubt that it has resources so vast and in so imperfect a state of development, that the industrial capacity of the Russian people will be sufficiently employed for a long time to come. Meanwhile, as manufactures are still in a primitive state, and the activity of the people is mainly agricultural, the opening up of the country necessarily entails the importation of foreign machinery and goods, and the United States will probably find Asiatic Russia an increasingly valuable market for a great variety of manufactures and supplies which no nation is better able to furnish, for the reason that we have long been accustomed to meet the demands in our home markets for the kinds of tools, machinery, railway supplies, etc., which have proved most economical and most useful in the development of virgin territory.

Russia's expansion in Asia has been accomplished in little more than four centuries, but most of her more important acquisitions—that is, from the economic point of view—have been of very recent date, as for example, the Amur region (1865); Central Asia (1865–1884); Manchuria (1894–1899). To-day Russia reaches from Sweden and Germany to the Pacific, and from the Arctic Ocean to Afghanistan and Persia. She has occupied large regions of northern China, and has acquired an open port on the Yellow Sea. She stands almost at the gates of India and well within the borders of Persia, ready at any moment, it would seem, to take up her onward march to the sea. But great as she is, Russia “is, in proportion to its size,” to quote Mr. Krausse, “the worse situated of any country in respect to maritime access. Of the four actual seaboard to which it extends, one, the Arctic Ocean, is practically useless. Another, the Pacific, is available only to a limited extent, being closed by ice during a great portion of the year,<sup>1</sup> besides being situated at such a distance from the centres of political and commercial activity as to be of restricted value. The Baltic also is closed for several months each year by ice, and the Black Sea, while affording an outlet at all seasons to the Mediterranean, lacks communications with the Empire, and is apt to be closed in case of war. This want of seaboard forms a very prominent factor in Russian history, and is largely responsible for the dearth of intercourse between Russia and other nations, with its accompaniment of lack of progress, as well as serving as an incentive to the constant seizure of new territory with the view of practically working a way towards a maritime outlet, which will serve to put the country on a parity with other nations.”

<sup>1</sup> Mr Krausse evidently refers to Vladivostock, but the recently acquired port of Talien-wan (renamed Dalny) is free of ice all the year.

It seems strange that, after having thus clearly indicated the main propelling force of Russia's advances in Asia—the need of convenient outlets for her products—Mr. Krausse should take so much trouble to prove that Russian expansion has been more a matter of greed and ambition on the part of the ruling classes, than the steadily growing pressure of industrial conditions such as undoubtedly brought about our own absorption of a continent, and the recent extension of our territorial limits to islands beyond the seas. The history of the expansion of Russia in Asia, indeed, has many points of similarity to that of the United States in its progress westward. Both nations have followed a natural law of development, in pushing their borders on direct lines, instead of dotting the globe with colonizing ventures of a more or less sporadic or accidental character. Each in turn has spread over the greater part of a continent, its onward march being often checked, but never wholly arrested by nomadic tribes of savages whom it had, first of all, to subdue. In both cases, military enterprise necessarily preceded the arts of peace, but whereas the United States had to deal with a single race, Russia has had the far more difficult task of adapting herself to a great variety of barbarous nationalities some of which entertained relations with European powers which greatly embarrassed her efforts.

The United States has also been more fortunate than Russia in this—that almost at the threshold of her territorial expansion, she was enabled to acquire by purchase from France and Spain, and later by conquest from Mexico, extended coast lines on the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific, with harbors which now provide convenient seaports for the vast stretches to the south and west that have gradually been incorporated into the Union. Had we been restricted to the Atlantic seaboard as the sole outlet for the products of the immense area west of the Alleghenies, we would be able to appreciate the growing restiveness of the Russian people in their confinement for so many generations to the icy shores of the Baltic, and the development of our western plains might have been but little more rapid than the industrial growth of their Siberian steppes. It may, indeed, be assumed that, but for the composite character of the Russian population and the difficulties growing out of racial differences, and the jealousies of rival powers in Europe having interests in the Mediterranean, Russia would long since have burst the bonds of her commercial imprisonment and established herself at eligible points on the seas. She had first to convert herself from an uncivilized to a civilized power, to weld together races so diverse as the Slav, the Cossack, the Tartar, and to make a nation homogeneous and strong enough to command respect for its wishes in the councils of the world. The

difficulties her statesmen have encountered, have been greatly increased by the fact that she is a European, as well as an Asiatic power, and her progress in Asia has always been impeded by the fact that, at any moment, she might find herself involved in a purely European quarrel.

The general similarity between the experience of the United States and Russia in their subjugation of vast areas occupied by barbarous peoples extends to the industrial conditions which their pioneers have had to face. The Russian engaged in developing the resources of Siberia, of Central Asia, of Manchuria, finds himself confronted by many of the difficulties and needs which the settlers of our Far West have but recently surmounted. Remote from markets, as they once were, he looks to railroads to enable him to utilize the agricultural and mineral resources of lands which, without modern facilities of transportation, would be unable to find outlets for their products. When these are provided it may be assumed that a transformation like that which has been wrought in our western states and territories will be effected in the fertile portions of Asiatic Russia. Towns will spring up in wastes but thinly peopled or practically uninhabited; diversified industries will gradually be introduced; a great economic development will follow. These results may be accepted as inevitable notwithstanding the objections which have been raised that a great part of Siberia is unproductive; that Russia's objects in occupying new territory have been largely political and military, and that she has built railroads more for strategic than for commercial purposes, and has shown but little disposition, thus far, to civilize and make industrially efficient the savage peoples she has brought under her sway.

It is a serious defect of Mr. Krausse's book, which contains much valuable information, that it lays undue stress upon these considerations, and ascribes to Russia ambitions which would be shadowy, vain and unprofitable if they were inspired merely by the lust of conquest, the jealousy of rival powers, and the desire for personal aggrandizement on the part of her tchinoviks. Mr. Krausse, indeed, as we have seen, contradicts himself by assigning as the great objective of Russian advances in Asia, the acquisition of ports on the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, and the Pacific which would give her harbors of ready access to the markets of the world. While the influences to which he assigns so much importance have undoubtedly played their part, they have been incidental to rather than chiefly causative of a development which has tended always towards commercial ends. In the earlier years of Russian expansion, this tendency may have been more or less unconscious, but there are

abundant evidences in recent years of a clear comprehension by Russian statesmen of the economic value of the results of her traditional policy when finally consummated. "Russia in Asia" is a work which shows careful research and is of great value as a summary of the salient facts of Russia's progress and present status in the East, but it is so strongly colored by the author's prepossessions and his frequently reiterated warnings of Muscovite duplicity, that it cannot be accepted as a safe presentation of a question which he admits is regarded as debatable even among the English statesmen whom he endeavors to arouse to a clearer realization of what he conceives to be the menace of Russian policy.

It is not unlikely that Russian diplomacy will ultimately find a solution of the problem of the Empire's relation with European powers which, while securing to Russia what she really needs for her commercial development, will not gratuitously threaten the legitimate interests of rival nations. Germany, as well as Great Britain, has interests in Persia. She has recently acquired the right to build a railroad through Asia Minor from Konieh east of Smyrna and south-east of the Bosphorus to Bassorah on the Persian Gulf, some 2,000 miles. This road may some day form part of the proposed transcontinental railroad through Southern Persia, Beloochistan, India, Burmah and China to the Pacific, as a glance at the map shows it to be the most direct route, from London, via Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Balkan peninsula, and Constantinople, to a point on the Persian frontier whence it could be continued almost due east across the continent of Asia, keeping well to the south of the Himalayan range, and terminating at some favorable point on the Chinese coast. If German and British interests should thus ally themselves, the fear of undue preponderance of Russia in Persia would lose much of its force, and there would probably be less opposition to the extension of Russian railroads in Persia with the view to acquisition of a port on the Arabian Sea. At any rate, we may safely assume that Russian statesmen would prefer a peaceful settlement which would satisfy the commercial requirements of the empire, to an effort for exclusive control which might embroil her in a life and death struggle with her powerful neighbors. The same considerations would seem to have even greater weight in China, where the interests of the United States, of France, of Japan, besides those of Germany and Great Britain would come into play.

The truth is that Russia has entered seriously upon the development of her vast resources in Asia, and her future operations there are likely to subordinate the spirit of military conquest to industrial considerations. She has already carved out for herself such great slices

of territory that it will be a long time before she is able to digest them. Her appetite for more is likely to be limited to the very natural desire to obtain a free channel to the Indian Ocean for the products of the vast Transcaspian region, as she has already obtained such channels via the Black Sea to the Mediterranean for her European provinces, and for Siberia and Manchuria at Vladivostock, and Dalny or Talién-wan. The *London Times* sees no menace in investments of Russian capital "to get the command of Persian trade," and "to develop industry in and on behalf of Persia," or in the construction of "a remarkable road, at a heavy cost and in spite of very considerable engineering difficulties, from the Caspian to Teheran."<sup>1</sup> The *Times* even goes so far as to express the opinion that it is quite possible "to arrive at a friendly understanding with Russia on the basis of equal rights and an open opportunity of trade in Persia," and after commending the liberal policy of M. Witte, the Finance Minister of Russia, in seeking to promote the industrial and commercial progress of the Empire "as opposed to the traditional methods of the military party," and attributing the same "peaceful and conciliatory principles" to the Czar, the *Times* adds: "If the position of Persia and her trade be regarded in this light, there is no reason why a good understanding between Russia and England should not be arrived at in relation to the future of regions, closely connected with the territories of both powers."

It is still possible, of course, to attribute to Russia the design of utilizing Persia as a means of obtaining an outlet to the sea on the south merely in order to command the sea route to India and the Far East, but this presupposes a readiness to defy the commercial interests of the whole of Europe, for which no practical reason could be found if Russia's primary object is what it appears to be, the acquisition only of the means of developing her commerce, and of ensuring that "peaceful progress" which the Minister of Finance, in his report upon the budget of the Empire for 1899, asserts is the object of "the loving care" of the Czar. In his report upon the budget for 1900, M. Witte concludes with these significant words:

"In presenting to Your Imperial Majesty his views on several problems of the economic life of Russia, the Minister of Finance takes the liberty, at the conclusion of his report, of mentioning a subject of essential importance to the whole civilized world, namely, the marked and universal tightness and embarrassment in the money market. This circumstance, which is causing no inconsiderable difficulty in the industro-commercial operations of all countries, proceeds from various circumstances of an economic character, and is also to a great extent

<sup>1</sup> *London Times*, December 27, 1899, p. 7.

complicated by recent events in South Africa. It is not, however, so much these circumstances, as the vague fears of further political complications, that are causing such embarrassment in money matters. The calm voice of reason is powerless to allay these fits of distrust in the stability of international relations. But the agitation would in a great measure be allayed, were the governing classes and the public abroad imbued with the same opinions on questions of world politics that are held by the Monarch of a hundred and thirty million faithful subjects."

In such professions on the part of Russian statesmen Mr. Krausse seems to see only the wiles of a diplomacy which, in his opinion, seeks to serve not the material interests of Russia, but the greed and ambition of a militarism striving always to lull its opponents into a fancied security with pledges it means to break at the first favorable opportunity. This has long been a favorite theory with Russophobists, and it might still have some plausibility but for the great economic changes which are going on in Russia. The empire of the Czar is no longer a great scaffolding of autocracy held up with bayonets—though militarism is still and will probably long remain a deeply rooted force—but a rapidly developing industrial power which, though strongly centralized and paternalistic, is accomplishing great results for the masses of the people. It is the minister of finance, not the minister of war, who is now the right arm of the Czar, and one has only to read his annual reports for the past few years to be impressed with the magnitude and practical importance of the reforms he has inaugurated in the economic life of the people. Among these may be mentioned the reform of the currency, the fostering of manufactures, the government control of liquor selling, the building of railways and various measures for the development of agriculture and the betterment of the condition of the peasantry. "The Russian State," says a writer in the *Russian Journal of Financial Statistics*,<sup>1</sup> "is the greatest land owner, the greatest capitalist, the greatest constructor of railways and carries on the largest business in the world." Whatever may have been the prevailing tendencies of Russia in the past, it is evident that internal development is what now concerns her most, and that she fully realizes the need of a long period of peace in which to build up her industries and to properly utilize her natural resources. It is this fact, doubtless, which causes great organs of English opinion, like the *London Times*, to incline to the view that an amicable adjustment of traditional difficulties with Russia is not impossible and to give full weight to the declarations of a pacific spirit on the part of the Czar.

FREDERIC EMORY.

*Washington, D. C.*

<sup>1</sup> Published in English at St. Petersburg, December 30, 1899. See pp. 12, 13.